

SECRET OF THE GREAT SEAL OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES

James H. Jones, Body-Servant to President Jefferson Davis, Tells How He Hid It, and Will Never Divulge Place of Concealment.

(Special to The Times-Dispatch.)

Washington, D. C., October 28.—Place, Deanwood, D. C.; time, now. But to any one sitting on the porch of the cozy, little home in the twilight, watching the moon creep over the big, dark hill and listening to the croaking of the frogs down in the damp hollows beyond the car tracks, it didn't seem like now. For the old man in the arm-chair was talking in low tones about the old days, the days of fifty years ago. He was living again the past in the time of fire and sword, of big battles and big men, when "Richmond rocked to roaring guns," and history was made anew at each sunset.

"Yes," he mused, "I am the man who hid the great seal of the Confederacy, and am the only person, either dead or alive, who knows where it is today."

It was James H. Jones, who was speaking. He is now a man of over eighty years, tall and slender, with a straight figure that is clothed in the same style he wore fifty years ago. He wears a long frock coat, black suit, small black tie and high collar. Before Mr. Davis was made President, Jones waited on him at the famous St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans, and when the war broke out and Mr. Davis was elected head of the Confederacy, Jones accompanied him as a body-servant, but was a free man and was paid wages for his services. He is a native of North Carolina, but of Indian descent, his father having been a Creole and his mother a Cherokee. The Indian blood shows very plainly in the swarthy skin and high cheekbones, as well as in the tall, lithe figure that even age cannot bend.

From the day he entered Mr. Davis's service till he left him a prisoner at Fortress Monroe, Jones was a faithful servant and a trustworthy friend to the whole family. At present Jones is living with his son, Dr. William Jones, in the new suburb of Deane-

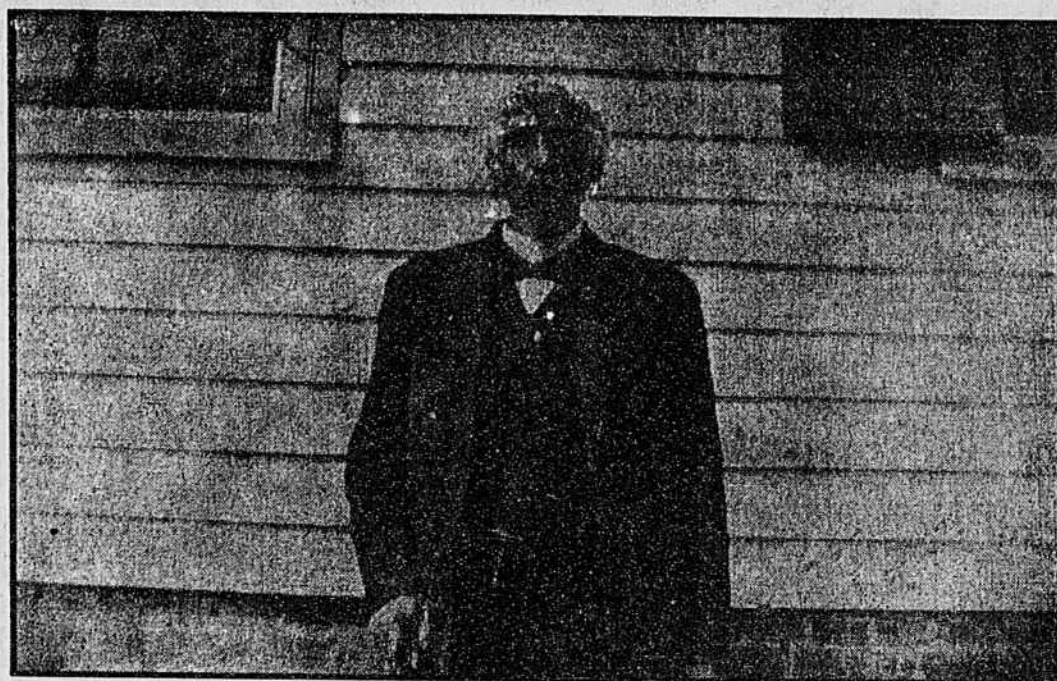
wood, about four miles out on the Benning line, near Washington.

Moves to Richmond.

"I was with Mr. Davis," the old man continued, "when he went to Montgomery, which was the first capital of the Confederacy, and then we moved to Richmond. The mansion there was a big house, with large pillars and beautiful grounds. Mr. Davis had a private office in the house, but his business office was down the street. Every morning about ten I went down with him. They were pretty busy times, too. There were Cabinet meetings, and I had to show the gentlemen in. And every day there were generals coming for consultations. Many a time I have seen General Lee come in for a talk with Mr. Davis, and there were Generals Stuart and Jackson, too, that I remember well."

"Life in Richmond then was not gay. We had receptions at the mansion sometimes, but no balls, and Mrs. Davis had a household of young children. There were Willie and Jeff and Joe and Miss Maggie and Miss Winnie—all little children. I remember when little Joe was killed. It happened that all the family were out of the house, the maids were gone and only the cook at home. She told me that little Joe had fallen, and was probably dead. So I ran down to Mr. Davis's office. Mrs. Davis was in the room with him, and I told them one of the children was hurt. It seems the child had been walking around the railing of the porch, which ran high above the ground, and below was a brick walk. The fall killed him."

"While I do not believe in slavery, I naturally wanted our troops to win. We in Virginia, especially Richmond, thought that Yankees were something awful in those days—that they had horns—and some folks were as afraid of a Yankee as they were of Satan himself. 'Do you know,' and the old man's voice sank into an impressive



James H. Jones, body-servant to President Jefferson Davis.

whisper, "I haven't gotten over that feeling yet—I somehow can't abide a Yankee this very day!"

"Over the darkening sky flashed the electric glow that hangs over the city, a golden mist brighter than the moonlight. And now, with the glory of the light from the capital of the nation of the free shining down on him, it seemed strange to hear one speak with the feelings of fifty years ago."

Shows Great Distress.

"I was in Mr. Davis's room when the news was brought to him of the death

of General Jackson. I well remember his distress, and that he exclaimed:

"The death of Jackson is the loss of a hundred thousand men." I also remember a little incident about General Lee. One day—I think it was at the time of the Seven Days' fight

around Richmond—Mr. Davis had me to drive him and General Lee out in the suburbs, to inspect the fortifications. The Yankee army was not very far off, either. As we were about to start I heard General Lee say to Mr. Davis: "Mr. Davis, do you think your coachman is trustworthy?"

"General Lee," Mr. Davis answered, "you can trust Jones as well as you can trust me—we are perfectly safe with him."

"I never blamed General Lee a bit for that speech. You see the Yankee lines were not so far out, but that I could have run my horses out to them, and a fine thing it would have been for the Yankees to have gotten the President of the Confederacy and the commanding-general of the Southern army at one clip. They got home all safe, you can bet."

"About the seal? Well, it was this way. The first seal the Confederacy ever used was made in Montgomery, and engraved on wood with knives. It was used to commission Admiral Semmes that became such a famous fighter afterwards. In Richmond one came from Baltimore—this was in 1862. But the last one, the one that Mr. Davis gave to me to hide, was made in England, by order of Mr. Mason, and shipped over, coming by the Fanny, a blockade runner. It arrived in a beautiful rosewood box, all inlaid with pearl and ivory, just like a pistol-case. It was made of silver with some ornamental designs of gold and weighed about ten pounds. The face had a figure of General Washington on horseback, a wreath of corn, wheat, tobacco and cotton flowers, and a Latin motto. This seal was never used."

"Entrusted With Great Seal." "Shortly after I came Mr. Davis called me into his private office, and put it into my hands. 'Jones,' he said, 'I want you to hide this and never tell any one where you put it.' I took the seal and hid it. The seal is there today. No human being, except myself, ever knew or ever will know where I put it."

"It was a sacred trust given me by Mr. Davis, that I will not betray and I will go down to my grave with it safe. Mr. Davis himself never asked me where I put it. Time and again people have tried to get the secret away from me, but they never could. I remember one man, a lawyer, talked to me for five hours trying to worm out the information, but he did not succeed. Another man told me he would give me \$15,000 for the secret. But I will never betray my trust."

"It has been said that the Yankee army, when it took Richmond, got the seal and brought it to Washington; that is not true. It was hidden by me where no man knows, and where no man will ever know."

"Shortly before General Lee surrendered Mr. Davis entrusted me with another important commission. He called me into his Cabinet room, and I remember that many members of it were sitting around; amongst them, I think, were Secretary Benjamin and Mr. Reagan. Mr. Davis told me he wanted me to take some government money down South—\$13,000,000, he said the amount was. Then he gave me instructions that I was to go to Newberry, S. C., and deliver the treasure to Captain Parker."

"The next day I put the fat 'ly carriage and team on the car for a blind, then piled the kegs of money under the fodder. We coupled on the train and started out, no one ever dreaming that the car with the carriage, horses and fodder contained \$13,000,000 in coin. In South Carolina I turned the money over to Captain Parker, who buried it, but it was afterwards dug up by the government officers when they deemed it safe from attack."

"Evaluation of Richmond." "Do I remember the evacuation of Richmond? Was I with Mr. Davis when he was captured? Yes, I remember our flight from Richmond as if it were yesterday. In early April, 1865, we all knew that the end was probably near, for Grant was digging General Lee's tracks, and our general was about worn out. I remember the last Sunday we were in Richmond. Generals Lee and Grant were at Appomattox. The city walked breathlessly for the news. A pall of coming disaster hung over us. Mr. Davis went to church as usual that morning, and while he was gone came a message for him. Knowing it to be important, I hurried to the church. The family pew was up at the very front. When I entered the services were being read, but the congregation, seeing me going with a message to the President, knew that something had happened, and waited. I put the envelope in Mr. Davis's hand; he broke it open and read it, then rose and walked out of the church. The entire congregation followed him. But

he said not a word, only went home. The message told of General Lee's surrender."

"Mr. Davis, attended by a small troop and several of his Cabinet, as well as by Burton Harrison, his private secretary, set out on horseback to go South. My idea is that the plan was to join General Johnston or go to Cuba, but I never knew fully. The rest of the family left town on the train, joining Mr. Davis when they left the railroad far South."

Capture of Mr. Davis.

"The capture took place near Irwinville, Ga. We made camp about twilight, and I remember that Mr. Davis had a bad attack of neuralgia, so went to rest early. We were in a woods of palm pines, the horses picketed to the wagons, and the whole party asleep early. But as I had to wash some of Miss Winnie's clothes, I remained up. It was bright moonlight, and I stood by the fire over the tub—in fact, I believe it was that very fire that guided the Yankees to our camp. Well, along about 3 o'clock in the morning I saw a man with a sabre creeping through the trees. The ground was soft, and his footsteps made no noise, but I knew it was none of our party. So I called Mr. Harrison."

"I know that the Yankees were trying to catch Mr. Davis, and as none of our men had sabres, it seemed very plain that the man skulking about in the shadow of the pines was after us. But Mr. Harrison refused to call Mr. Davis, thinking I was madly alarmed. I then called to Colonel Lovell of Texas, but he also refused to awake Mr. Davis. Then I in turn told Mr. Reagan, Colonel Wood and Colonel the liberty of waking up Mr. Davis."

"Presently from out of the pines, on all sides, completely surrounding us, rode a body of Yankees. I knew that was the end. I ran into Mr. Davis's room, where he and his wife lay asleep. I shook him, and he jumped up. He was completely dressed except his boots, but I grabbed a waterproof cape and threw it about his shoulders. He started out of the tent door. Just a few feet before the tent stood a Yankee trooper, with his gun pointing right at Mr. Davis."

"When Mrs. Davis saw this she rushed out, half-clad as she was, and begged the man not to shoot."

"I noticed then that I had by mistake put Mrs. Davis's cape on Mr. Davis, so I dashed into the tent, got Mr. Davis's cape, took off the one he had on, put that on Mrs. Davis and put the one belonging to Mr. Davis on him. It is this incident that started the famous story about his trying to escape. In woman's clothes. Mr. Davis's cape was almost exactly like that of his wife, and made from the same goods. He also had a small shawl about his head on account of his neuralgia."

"Well, after I got the capes right, I knew all was up, so I said to Mr. Davis that he had better come over to the fire and get a cup of coffee. He and I then walked over to the fire, where I had a pot on boiling, and I handed him a cup. As he stood drinking it, Colonel Pritchard, who commanded the Yankees, came up."

"Is your name Jones?" he said to me.

"Yes," I answered.

"Is this Mr. Davis's camp?" he asked.

"It is," I said.

"Where is Mr. Davis?" he again asked.

"He is this gentleman standing here drinking this coffee," I made reply.

Truth About Capture.

"Colonel Pritchard then spoke to Mr. Davis, and the two men stood for some time in conversation. Mr. Davis never went in any woman's clothing; never went out with one of the servants pretending he was going to the spring, and no Yankee ever laid his hand on him—those tales are all true. I was there every minute of the time; I saw everything that went on, and what I tell is the truth and the whole

truth about the capture of Mr. Davis. We packed up then and went along with the Yankees, was the only one of the servants to accompany Mr. Davis to Fortress Monroe."

"Yes, sir, they were stirring times. And we would have won it only we could have got enough men. But the Yankees had the men and the money, too."

"And the old man's voice dropped. 'Yankees' were evidently his pet horror word. The wind blew chill up the electric light poles, with the state, the telephone wires overhead. Far off down the track twinkled a row of electric lights, and a trolley car, a trolley car. But the old man heard it. His thoughts were with the past and its historic dead, with the statesmen and soldiers of his youth, with those who had written the life of a nation on a hundred blood-stained fields—and perhaps he longed to be amongst them—to 'cross over the river and rest in the shade of the trees.'"

Bristol Social News

(Special to The Times-Dispatch.)

Bristol, Va., October 28.—Mrs. George Eader arrived here from Sherman, Tex., this week to visit Mrs. Harry Shelton.

Miss Blanche Wilkinson has entered school at Oakesboro, a girls' school, opened Mrs. Long Island Sound.

Mrs. Robert L. Taylor is visiting relatives in Middle Tennessee, and will go home to Georgia before returning home.

Mrs. S. E. Owen and daughter, Miss Alice, left this week for their home in Florida after spending the summer and fall in Bristol.

Captain and Mrs. John H. Preston, of Seven Mine Ford, were guests of their daughter, Mrs. Robert Gray, on Moore Street, this week.

Mr. and Mrs. D. A. Vinos have returned to Washington, D. C., after a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Boggs.

Mr. and Mrs. P. S. Shelton have returned to Floyd county, after a visit to their son, Mr. Shelton, at St. Albans, N. H.

Mrs. Walter Dickenson, of Castletown, Va., was the guest of Mrs. N. H. Keen, this week, and from Bristol went to Johnson City to visit her daughter.

Mrs. Robert L. Taylor has returned to Washington, D. C., to visit Senator Taylor, after a visit to her sisters, Mrs. B. L. Dulaney and Mrs. H. D. Bachman, Jr., here.

Mrs. E. A. Kendrick has returned from a visit to friends in Virginia.

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Sheen announced their marriage, which has been celebrated W. G. Sheen II.

Mrs. J. A. Muse has returned from Asheville, N. C., where she visited her daughter.

Houston Social News

(Special to The Times-Dispatch.)

Houston, Va., October 28.—The Rev. James Grammer, D. D., and Mrs. Grammer, of Winchester, are visiting at the rectory, Dr. Grammer, served as pastor at St. John's Church, Houston, on last Sunday in the absence of the Rev. Rufus Bouldin.

Mrs. E. A. Kendrick, of Bristol, Tenn., spent the week-end with Mrs. Nannie Tredway, of Danville, returned to her home in Houston on Monday.

Miss Mary R. Thornton, of Courtview, is entertaining informally at a house party in her home, 1015 E. 11th St., on Sunday.

Miss Mary Green, of Houston, and Mrs. Mildred Edmunds returned to her home in Danville, Va., on Monday after spending the week-end with Mr. and Mrs. Robert Edmondson, of South Boston.

Frank Williamson and Miss Lula Edmondson returned to Houston on Sunday evening after several weeks' visit to New York.

Mr. and Mrs. G. R. Frost, who have been spending some weeks in Kewick, Albemarle county, have returned to their home in Houston.

Judge William R. Barkdale, who has been holding court at Lunenburg Court-house, returned to his home in Houston on Tuesday.

Benjamin Wyche, of Houston, formerly librarian at the Central Library, San Antonio, Tex., is compiling an index to the county marriage records from the year 1855 to the present, being a work of great utility, the labor of Mr. Wyche will prove of great interest from a historical viewpoint, during the early years of the county there being a constant stream of emigration and immigration, many families prominent in the history of the country, leaving this portion of Virginia for Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee, also Mississippi, and it is learned that Mr. Wyche, of Williamsonburg, will print instalments of this index in the Williamson and Mary Quarterly.

Radford Social News

(Special to The Times-Dispatch.)

Radford, Va., October 28.—Mrs. James Fleming Martin has issued invitations to the wedding of their daughter, Miss Lena Mae, and Walter Reamer, Jr., to take place Wednesday evening, November 3, at 8 o'clock, in the First Baptist Church.

In the convention of the Women's Auxiliary of the Episcopal Church, meeting in Salem, Radford had two missionary representatives, John Wilson, secretary of Boone county, and Miss M. E. Shanks, of Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee, also Miss Adams, of the Home Mission, Mrs. Elizabeth Adams was one of the delegates.

Misses Maggie Epling and Thelma Martin left Wednesday for a month's stay in Williamson and Huntington, W. Va.

Epling spent a few days in Roanoke this week.

T. J. Northerness returned Tuesday from Boston.

Mrs. W. A. Wilson returned home Tuesday after visiting her daughter, Mrs. Earley, in Salisbury.

Mrs. E. E. Shanks, of Meadow Creek, is visiting Mrs. E. E. Shanks.

Misses Laura and Mackie Ingles returned Wednesday from Roanoke.

Richard Simmerman, of Dublin Institution, spent Saturday and Sunday last with Thelma Martin.

T. W. Simpson has returned home from North Carolina, where he has been at work.

Charlie Zimmerman, of Roanoke College, spent the week-end with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Zimmerman.

Mrs. George Mitchell and little daughter, Margaret, and Miss Blanch Boyer, are visiting relatives in Johnson City.

Dr. D. E. Motley, of Washington Christian College, was in town this week.

Misses Antoinette Harvey returned to her home in Middleburgh Tuesday after visiting Misses Laura and Mackie Ingles.

Sidney Johnson, of Roanoke College, and Sidney Johnson, of University of Virginia, spent a few days with their parents this week.

West Point Social News

(Special to The Times-Dispatch.)

West Point, October 28.—The Boy Scouts organization is creating much interest in West Point. Two troops, consisting of two patrols each, or sixteen boys, were formed. The patrol leaders are as follows: No. 1, Richard Broadus, leader; Charles Bray, assistant leader; Patrol No. 2, Richard Corr, leader; assistant leader, Otto Owens. Patrol No. 3, Jack Marshall, leader; Richard Williams, assistant leader; Patrol No. 4, Jack Clements, leader; Eddie Wolfe, assistant leader.

Mrs. A. L. Stratford, of Richmond, is a guest of Mrs. Thomas P. Bagby this week.

Mrs. Jane Wilkinson, Mrs. Joseph Wilkinson and daughter, Elizabeth, are visiting friends in Norfolk.

Miss Mae Owens has returned from a week's visit to friends in Walker, Ga.

Mr. and Mrs. Philip Hoffman entertained a few friends on their launch Thursday.

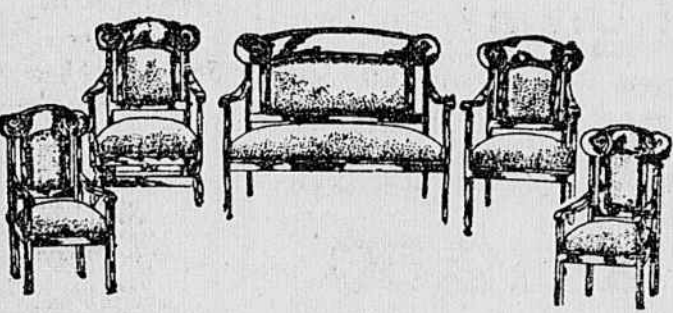
Mr. Elwood Corning and A. Julian Bagby were at King William Court-house on Wednesday.

Mrs. George Field has returned from a visit to her daughter, Mrs. J. C. Nease, in Chesterfield.

The Thimble Club was entertained this week by Mrs. B. B. Bagby.

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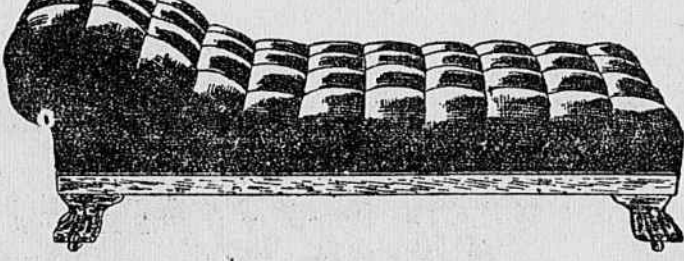
New Method Gas Ranges and Hot Water Heaters

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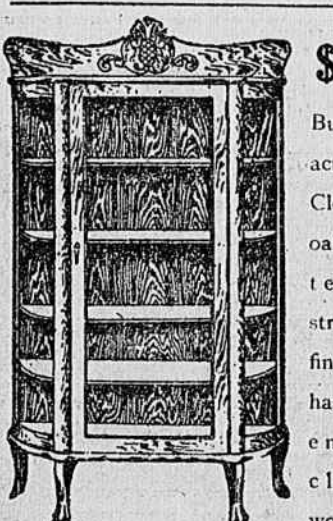
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